

Message Text

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SUBJ: CUBA BACKS PANAMANIAN UNSC CANDIDACY

SUMMARY: A PANAMANIAN MISSION, HEADED BY UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA RECTOR ROMULO ESCOBAR, VISITED CUBA JUNE 5-6. A CONTINUATION OF GOP'S DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO UNDERLINE LATIN SUPPORT FOR ITS CANAL TREATY POSITION AND SECURE BACKING FOR ITS UN SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT BID, THE ESCOBAR VISIT WAS SUCCESSFUL ON BOTH COUNTS. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS, CUBAN PRIME MINISTER CASTRO HAS PLEDGED PANAMA HIS COUNTRY'S VOTE IN THE GOP'S BID FOR A SEAT ON THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL. THE CUBAN COMMITMENT CAME DURING THE JUNE 5-6 VISIT OF A SPECIAL PANAMANIAN DIPLOMATIC MISSION LED BY UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA RECTOR ROMULO ESCOBAR BETHANCOURT. AS REPORTED IN JUNE 9 PAPERS, CASTRO -- WHO MET WITH THE PANAMANIAN DELEGATION JUNE 5 -- TERMED THE GOP'S UNSC CANDIDACY AS "FULLY JUSTIFIED" AND, IN ADDITION TO PLEDGING CUBAN VOTE, REITERATED CUBA'S "UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT" FOR PANAMA'S CANAL ASPIRATION. THE OFFICIAL PURPOSE OF THE ESCOBAR MISSION, AS STATED IN THE PRESS,

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WAS TO CONVEY A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM GENERAL TORRIJOS

AND A FOREIGN MINISTRY STATUS REPORT ON THE CANAL
TREATY NEGOTIATION.

2. A JUNE 6 PRENSA LATINA REPORT OF AN INTERVIEW
WITH ESCOBAR, QUOTED THE RECTOR AS CONDEMNING THE
POSITION OF U.S. SENATORS OPPOSED TO A NEW TREATY AND AS
ASSERTING THAT PANAMA DISCOUNTED THEM. WHEN ASKED ABOUT
THE GOP'S REACTION TO A SENATE REJECTION OF A NEW TREATY,
ESCOBAR WAS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT PANAMA WOULD FIRST
ATTEMPT TO REACH A SOLUTION THROUGH DIALOGUE AND UNDER-
STANDING. SHOULD THE SENATE REJECT OR AVOID CONSIDERATION
OF A NEW TREATY, PANAMA WOULD CONTINUE FOR A TIME APPEAL-
ING BEFORE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND COULD TAKE ITS
CASE TO THE UNITED NATIONS. IF SUCH TACTICS FAIL, SAID
ESCOBAR, "I AM SURE, AS GENERAL TORRIJOS HAS STATED, THIS
GENERATION OF PANAMANIAN WILL SACRIFICE ITSELF SO THAT
THE NEW GENERATION WILL BE TRULY FREE." ON THE DEFENSE
ISSUE, ESCOBAR NOTED THAT THE KISSINGER/TACK PRINCIPLES
CONTEMPLATED "THE REAL AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION" OF
PANAMA IN CANAL DEFENSE. THE GOP'S CONCEPT IS THAT PANAMA'S
PARTICIPATION MUST INCREASE PARALLEL WITH A DECREASING U.S.
MILITARY AND THE "ESTABLISHMENT" OF THE NEUTRALITY
OF THE WATERWAY. FOR NEUTRALITY TO BE EFFECTIVE,
IT MUST BE "DEVELOPED" IN CONTEXT OF THE UN AND
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL COUNTRIES. ESCOBAR
STATED THAT PANAMA, IN CONFORMITY WITH THE TREATY
OF TLAHELCO, WAS ALSO INSISTING THAT NO NUCLEAR
WEAPONS BE PERMITTED ON ITS TERRITORY.

3.COMMENT: ESCOBAR'S MISSION, WHICH WAS GIVEN
PROMINENT PRESS PLAY, IS INDICATIVE OF GOP'S DETERMINA-
TION TO PURSUE ITS UNSC BID. WHILE IT INITIALLY
APPEARED TO HAVE LITTLE CHANCE OF PERSUADING ARGENTINA
TO CEDE ITS CANDIDACY, THE GOP'S PERSISTENT DIPLOMACY
THROUGHOUT THE HEMISPHERE MAY BE PAYING OFF. A FOREIGN
MINISTRY SOURCE HAS TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT TACK HAS
INDICATED HE IS EXPECTING A LETTER FROM ARGENTINE
FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES RENOUNCING THE GOA'S CANDIDACY,
THUS LEAVING THE WAY OPEN FOR PANAMA.

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